

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5134

INFO USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 0638

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SENV, MILI, IT

SUBJ: TREES AT CAMP DARBY

REF: STATE 006065, DTG 100032Z JAN 75

1. EMBASSY HAS SHARED DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN FOR THE POSSIBLE POLITICAL FALLOUT FROM THE TREE-CUTTING AT CAMP DARBY REQUIRED BY THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM. DESPITE THE CLEAR AUTHORITY CONTAINED IN THE ORIGINAL CAMP DARBY AGREEMENTS TO REMOVE SUCH TREES AS MAY BE NECESSARY WE, WITH THE SUPPORT OF SETAF AND THE 8TH LOG COMMAND, HAVE PROCEEDED ESPECIALLY DELIBERATELY AND CAREFULLY IN THIS MATTER IN DEFERENCE TO SUCH VAGUE ITALIAN ECOLOGICAL SENSIBILITIES AS HAVE THUS FAR SURFACED IN THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE MFA (NATO DIRECTORATE) OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS IN AN ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN CONCURRENCE TO CUT THE APPROXIMATELY 300 QUALITY TREES OVER 22 CM IN DIAMETER, THE REMOVAL OF WHICH IS NECESSARY TO BEGIN PHASE ONE OF THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM. AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE SOUGHT MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FULL EXTENT OF THE PROGRAM WHICH WE ASSUMED, AND WHICH THE MFA (APPARENTLY INFORMED BY THE ITALIAN MEMBERS OF THE MIXED COMMISSION AT CAMP DARBY) SURMISED, WOULD INVOLVE MORE EXTENSIVE CUTTING.

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3. THE AMBASSADOR AND MEMBERS OF THE STAFF RECEIVED A COMPREHENSIVE BRIEFING ON THE RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE

AMMUNITION STORAGE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM ON DECEMBER 2. (A COPY OF THE BRIEFING MATERIAL IS BEING POUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT EUR/WE). WE FOUND THE RATIONALE PERSUASIVE, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF A BADLY NEEDED UPGRADING OF THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF THE STORAGE FACILITY. THE ENTIRE PROGRAM WILL REQUIRE THE REMOVAL OF AN ESTIMATED 1700 QUALITY TREES OVER 22 CMS IN DIAMETER. THAT NUMBER IS NOT OF ITSELF SENSATIONAL WHEN CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2000 ACRES OF WOODLAND IN WHICH THE PROJECT WILL BE CARRIED OUT.

4. ON 19 DECEMBER A BRIEFING SIMILAR TO THAT GIVEN TO THE AMBASSADOR WAS PRESENTED AT CAMP DARBY TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MIXED COMMISSION AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. THE SENIOR MOD REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT, COLONEL (LOGISTICS OFFICER, MOD), IDENTIFIED TWO PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT; THE TREE CUTTING, WHICH HE CONSIDERED THE LEAST ONEROUS AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO RESOLUTION WITHOUT GREAT DIFFICULTY, AND THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF PRESENT ITALIAN LAW REGARDING AMMUNITION STORAGE (LIMITING SINGLE MAGAZINE STORAGE TO TWENTY TONS) AND THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION (WHICH PROVIDES FOR 100 TONS PER MAGAZINE). THERE IS PROPOSED LEGISLATION BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT WHICH WOULD MODIFY THE EXISTING LAW TO REFLECT NATO STORAGE STANDARDS. FAROTTI REPORTEDLY INDICATED THAT THIS HURDLE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE INSUPERABLE.

5. AT A DECEMBER MEETING WITH MFA SECRETARY GENERAL MANZINI THE AMBASSADOR PROPOSED A FULL SCALE BRIEFING AT THE MFA FOR THE SECRETARY GENERAL, MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF, AND THOSE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MOD HE MIGHT WISH TO INVITE. MANZINI HAS AGREED TO THE BRIEFING WHICH WILL BE HELD JANUARY 16. SETAF AND THE 8TH LOG COMMAND WILL PROVIDE THE BRIEFING TEAM.

6. THE DIFFIDENCE OF THE MFA IN THIS MATTER CLEARLY HAS BEEN ANOTHER SYMPTOM OF THE BROADER ITALIAN POLITICAL MALAISE. OBVIOUSLY, IF A DISTORTED AND SENSATIONALIZED TREE-CUTTING ASPECT OF THE PROJECT BECOMES PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, WE AND THE GOI COULD EXPECT EMOTIONAL ATTACKS FROM THE ENVIORNMENTALISTS
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SUPPORTED BROADLY IN THE PRESS AND PARLIAMENT. IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WE COULD NOT EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO COME STRONGLY TO OUR DEFENSE. THAT OF COURSE IS A WORST CASE SCENARIO. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT TREE CUTTING ON THE SCALE DESCRIBED TO US, PHASED OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, WOULD GO UNREMARKED, UNLESS, IMPROBABLY, A MEMBER OF THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY CHOSE TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF IT. THERE IS SOME CUTTING AT THE CAMP DARBY WOODLAND ON AN ALMOST CONTINUOUS BASIS AND IN FACT IN THE INTEREST OF GOOD FOREST MANAGEMENT, THERE OUGHT TO BE MORE. MOREOVER,

SETAF AND THE 8TH LOG COMMAND HAVE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO PLANT REPLACEMENT QUALITY TREES ELSEWHERE ON REQUEST OF THE GOI.

7. IN OUR VIEW THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM AT CAMP DARBY REPRESENTS CLEAR BENEFITS TO THE U.S., TO NATO AND TO ITALY. APART FROM THE ELEMENT OF THE PLAUSIBLE URGENT STORAGE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR FORCES IN SUPPORT OF NATO PURPOSES, THERE IS THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF THE CREDIBLE SECURITY OF MATERIEL ATTRACTIVE TO TERRORIST GROUPS. WE, OUR MILITARY AUTHORITIES, AND THE ITALIANS CERTAINLY SHARE THAT LATTER CONCERN IN FULL MEASURE. AS THE DEPARTMENT INDICATED IN THE REFTEL, THERE ARE SOME FACTORS IN THIS PROJECT THAT MAKE IT LESS THAN PROPITIOUS AT THIS MOMENT IN ITALIAN HISTORY. NONETHELESS, WE ARE PERSUADED THAT THE PROJECT CAN STAND ON ITS OWN MERITS, THAT WE SHOULD GIVE THE ITALIANS AS CLEAR AND COMPLETE A PICTURE OF OUR INTENTIONS AS POSSIBLE, AND THAT THE DECISION AS TO WHETHER TO GO ON WITH IT, ULTIMATELY THEIRS, BE LEFT TO THEM. AT THE PRESENT STAGE IN OUR DIALOGUE, THAT IN EFFECT IS WHERE THE MATTER STANDS. VOLPE

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